WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A graphical user interface adapted to browse and retrieve pictures stored in a digital image database, said graphical user interface comprising:

a metadata decoder adapted to decode metadata stored in digital image files;

a first display level constructed with the aid of decoded metadata, said first display level comprising a first metaphor representing the span of time over which pictures stored in said database were captured, and a plurality of first icons placed on said first metaphor representing predefined temporal intervals, said first icons being proportionately sized to correspond to the number of pictures captured during a predefined temporal interval; and

at least a second display level constructed with the aid of decoded metadata and linked to said first display level and triggered by activating one of said first icons, said second display level comprising a second metaphor, and second icons placed on said second metaphor for grouping the pictures represented by the activated first icon, said second icons being proportionately sized to correspond to the number of pictures captured for each grouping.

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2. The graphical user interface of Claim 1, wherein the time intervals represented by said first icons correspond to years, and said second icons correspond to months, according to decoded metadata.

3. The graphical user interface of Claim 2, further comprising:

at least a third display level constructed with the aid of decoded metadata, linked to said second display level and triggered by activating one of said second icons, said third display level comprising a third metaphor, and third icons placed on said third metaphor for grouping the pictures represented by the activated second icon by the day of the week of capture, said third icons being proportionately sized to correspond to the number of pictures captured for each grouping.

4. The graphical user interface of Claim 3, further comprising:

at least a fourth display level constructed with the aid of decoded metadata, linked to said third display level and triggered by activating one of said third icons, said fourth display level comprising a fourth metaphor, and fourth icons placed on said fourth metaphor for grouping the pictures represented by the activated third icon by the time of day of capture, said fourth icons being proportionately sized to correspond to the number of pictures captured for each grouping.

5. The graphical user interface of Claim 1, wherein the time intervals represented by said first icons correspond to years, and said second icons correspond to identified events during which pictures are captured, according to decoded metadata.

6. The graphical user interface of Claim 5, wherein the display position of said second metaphor is substantially perpendicular to the display position of said first metaphor.

7. The graphical user interface of Claim 1, wherein the time intervals represented by said first icons correspond to years, and said second icons correspond to identified locations from which pictures are captured, according to decoded metadata.

8. The graphical user interface of Claim 1, wherein the time intervals represented by said first icons correspond to years, and said second icons correspond to identified people present in pictures, according to decoded metadata.

9. The graphical user interface of Claim 1, wherein the time intervals represented by said first icons correspond to decades during which pictures are captured, and said second icons correspond to years during which pictures are captured, according to decoded metadata.

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10. The graphical user interface of Claim 1, further comprising an additional display level constructed with the aid of decoded metadata, linked to said second display level and triggered by activating one of said second icons, said additional display level comprising additional level thumbnail icons of the pictures represented by the activated second icon.

11. The graphical user interface of Claim 1, wherein the time intervals represented by said first icons correspond to years and said second icons correspond to months, according to decoded metadata, said graphical user interface further comprising an additional display level constructed with the aid of decoded metadata, linked to said second display level and triggered by activating one of said second icons, said additional display level comprising additional level thumbnail icons of the pictures represented by the activated second icon.

12. The graphical user interface of Claim 3, further comprising an additional display level constructed with the aid of decoded metadata, linked to said third display level and triggered by activating one of said third icons, said additional display level comprising additional level thumbnail icons of the pictures represented by the activated third icon.

13. The graphical user interface of Claim 4, further comprising an additional display level constructed with the aid of decoded metadata, linked to said fourth display level and triggered by activating one of said fourth icons, said additional display level comprising additional level thumbnail icons of the pictures represented by the activated fourth icon.

14. The graphical user interface of Claim 1, wherein the time intervals represented by said first icons correspond to years, and said second icons correspond to identified events during which pictures are captured, according to decoded metadata, said graphical user interface further comprising an additional display level constructed with the aid of decoded metadata, linked to said second display level and triggered by activating one of said second icons, said additional

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display level comprising additional display level thumbnail icons of the pictures represented by the activated second icon.

15. The graphical user interface of Claim 1, wherein the time intervals represented by said first icons correspond to years, and said second icons correspond to identified locations from which pictures are captured, according to decoded metadata, said graphical user interface further comprising an additional display level constructed with the aid of decoded metadata, linked to said second display level and triggered by activating one of said second icons, said additional display level comprising additional display level thumbnail icons of the pictures represented by the activated second icon.

16. The graphical user interface of Claim 1, wherein the time intervals represented by said first icons correspond to years, and said second icons correspond to identified people present in pictures, according to decoded metadata, said graphical user interface further comprising an additional display level linked to said second display level and triggered by activating one of said second icons, said additional display level comprising additional display level thumbnail icons of the pictures represented by the activated second icon.

17. A method of producing a graphical user interface (GUI) adapted to browse and retrieve pictures stored in a digital image database, said method comprising the steps of:

decoding metadata stored in digital image files;

providing a first GUI level constructed with the aid of decoded metadata, said first GUI level comprising a first metaphor representing the span of time over which pictures stored in said database were captured, and a plurality of first icons placed on said first metaphor representing predefined temporal intervals, said first icons being proportionately sized to correspond to the number of pictures captured during a predefined temporal interval; and

providing at least a second GUI level constructed with the aid of decoded metadata, linked to said first GUI level and triggered by activating one of said first

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icons, said second GUI level comprising a second metaphor, and second icons placed on said second metaphor for grouping the pictures represented by the activated first icon, said second icons being proportionately sized to correspond to the number of pictures captured for each grouping.

18. The method of Claim 17, wherein the time intervals represented by said first icons correspond to years, and said second icons correspond to months, according to decoded metadata.

19. The method of Claim 18, further comprising the step of:

providing at least a third GUI level constructed with the aid of decoded metadata, linked to said second GUI level and triggered by activating one of said second icons, said third GUI level comprising a third metaphor, and third icons placed on said third metaphor for grouping the pictures represented by the activated second icon by the day of the week of capture, said third icons being proportionately sized to correspond to the number of pictures captured for each grouping.

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20. The method of Claim 19, further comprising the step of:

providing at least a fourth GUI level constructed with the aid of decoded metadata, linked to said third GUI level and triggered by activating one of said third icons, said fourth GUI level comprising a fourth metaphor, and fourth icons placed on said fourth metaphor for grouping the pictures represented by the activated third icon by the time of day of capture, said fourth icons being proportionately sized to correspond to the number of pictures captured for each grouping.

21. The method of Claim 17, wherein the time intervals represented by said first icons correspond to years, and said second icons correspond to identified events during which pictures are captured, according to decoded metadata.

22. The method of Claim 21, wherein the display position of said second metaphor is substantially perpendicular to the display position of said first metaphor.

23. The method of Claim 17, wherein the time intervals represented by said first icons correspond to years, and said second icons correspond to identified locations from which pictures are captured, according to decoded metadata.

24. The method of Claim 17, wherein the time intervals represented by said first icons correspond to years, and said second icons correspond to identified people present in pictures, according to decoded metadata.

25. The method of Claim 17, wherein the time intervals represented by said first icons correspond to decades during which pictures are captured, and said second icons correspond to years during which pictures are captured, according to decoded metadata.

26. The method of Claim 17, further comprising the step of:

providing an additional GUI level constructed with the aid of decoded metadata, linked to said second GUI level and triggered by activating one of said second icons, said additional GUI level comprising additional GUI level thumbnail icons of the pictures represented by the activated second icon.

27. The method of Claim 17, wherein the time intervals represented by said first icons correspond to years and said second icons correspond to months, according to decoded metadata, said method further comprising the step of:

providing an additional GUI level constructed with the aid of decoded metadata, linked to said second GUI level and triggered by activating one of said second icons, said additional GUI level comprising additional GUI level thumbnail icons of the pictures represented by the activated second icon.

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28. The method of Claim 19, further comprising the step of:

providing an additional GUI level constructed with the aid of decoded metadata, linked to said third GUI level and triggered by activating one of said third icons, said additional GUI level comprising additional GUI level thumbnail icons of the pictures represented by the activated third icon.

29. The method of Claim 20, further comprising the step of:

providing an additional GUI level constructed with the aid of decoded metadata, linked to said fourth GUI level and triggered by activating one of said fourth icons, said additional GUI level comprising additional GUI level thumbnail icons of the pictures represented by the activated fourth icon.

30. The method of Claim 17, wherein the time intervals represented by said first icons correspond to years, and said second icons correspond to identified events during which pictures are captured, according to decoded metadata, said method further comprising the step of:

providing an additional GUI level constructed with the aid of decoded metadata, linked to said second GUI level and triggered by activating one of said second icons, said additional GUI level comprising additional GUI level thumbnail icons of the pictures represented by the activated second icon.

31. The method of Claim 17, wherein the time intervals represented by said first icons correspond to years, and said second icons correspond to identified locations from which pictures are captured, according to decoded metadata, said method further comprising the step of:

providing an additional GUI level constructed with the aid of decoded metadata, linked to said second GUI level and triggered by activating one of said second icons, said additional GUI level comprising additional GUI level thumbnail icons of the pictures represented by the activated second icon.

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32. The method of Claim 17, wherein the time intervals represented by said first icons correspond to years, and said second icons correspond to identified people present in pictures, according to decoded metadata, said method further comprising the step of:

providing an additional GUI level constructed with the aid of decoded metadata, linked to said second GUI level and triggered by activating one of said second icons, said additional GUI level comprising additional GUI level thumbnail icons of the pictures represented by the activated second icon.

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